

**Dickerson Heights Regeneration Harvest
Timber Sale**

Environmental Assessment

EA# OR105-98-09

South River Field Office, Roseburg District

Finding of No Significant Impact

Date Prepared: April 21, 2006

The South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed the environmental assessment (EA) for the Dickerson Heights Timber Sale, which is located in Sections 9, 11, 15 and 21 of T. 29 S., R. 7 W., W.M. The EA considered four alternatives. Two alternatives were not analyzed in detail (EA, pp. 9-10) because they would not meet the objective of the proposed action and/or would not conform to management direction from the Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*. The two alternatives analyzed in detail consist of Alternative One, No Action, and Alternative Two, the proposed action (EA, pp. 5-8).

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment are not present and will not be affected, so no unique characteristics would be impacted (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 508.27(b) (3)): Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; wilderness; waste, solid or hazardous; and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

The action is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice. No potential impacts to low-income or minority populations have been identified internally by the BLM or externally through public notification and involvement. Correspondence with local tribal governments has not identified any unique or special resources providing religious, employment, subsistence or recreation opportunities. Employment would involve local contractors who engage in similar types of work throughout Douglas County.

No Native American religious concerns or values were identified with respect to the project area, so there will be no effect on Native American Religious Concerns (EA, p. 10). Pedestrian surveys of all units were conducted in conjunction with a literature search of catalogued cultural and historical sites, as described in the EA (p. 26). No cultural or historical resources were identified. As a consequence, there will be no adverse impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(8)).

Field surveys for Special Status and Survey and Manage botanical species were conducted on the timber sale area as documented in the EA (pp. 19-20 and Appendix D). Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus sulfureus* ssp. *Kincaidii*), a Federally-threatened species was located east of Unit F (1), in Section 11, T. 29 S., R. 7 W.

Tall bugbane (*Cimicifuga elata*), a Bureau Sensitive species, is present in Unit A (3) above BLM Road No. 29-7-3.0, extending approximately 500 feet upslope in an area sparsely populated with larger trees.

As discussed in the EA (p. 40), there will be no direct effect to the **Kincaid's lupine** population in the project area because it is located entirely outside of timber sale unit boundaries. The site has been clearly marked and disturbance of the area will be prohibited. Between April 1 and July 31, if there is active timber hauling, dust abatement will be applied to the road bordering the site to prevent the possibility of dust interfering with plant pollination.

As described in the EA (p. 41), there will be no direct effect to the **tall bugbane** population in as clumping retention trees in and around the site will prevent ground disturbance and maintain existing levels of canopy closure.

Surveys of suitable habitat for the Bureau Sensitive Chace sideband snail (*Monadenia chaceana*), also a Survey and Manage species, and Oregon shoulderband snail (*Helminthoglypta hertleini*) were conducted. Chace sideband snails were identified at three sites (EA, p. 17), two in the southeastern portion of Unit C (2), below BLM Road No. 29-7-3.0, and the third in a Riparian Reserve adjacent to the southwest boundary of proposed Unit H (deferred from harvest). Oregon shoulderband snails were identified at two sites (EA, p. 18), in the road right-of-way near the south end of Unit C (2), where rip-rap was used to armor the road cut bank along BLM Road No. 29-7-3.0, and in rock debris in a quarry site at the south end of proposed Unit H (deferred from harvest). As noted in the EA (p. 19), suitable foraging habitat for great gray owls, was also identified to the northwest of proposed Unit H (deferred from harvest).

As discussed in the EA (p. 36), the **Chace sideband snail** sites in Unit C (2) have been protected with islands of retention trees which will maintain microclimate, protect habitat, and preserve forage for the snails. In Unit H, which is deferred from harvest, in addition to the protection afforded by the Riparian Reserve, retention trees have been designated upslope to provide additional shading (EA, p. 36). As a consequence, the populations are expected to persist in their present locations.

The **Oregon shoulderband snail** sites adjacent to Unit C and Unit H will not receive any special protection because they are located in road rights-of-way designated as single-use facilities that are withdrawn from the forested land base and as such are not managed as habitat (EA, p. 37).

The site adjacent to Unit C will be unaffected because there will be no disturbance of the road cutbank which is outside of the unit boundaries, and retention trees designated below the road for the protection of Chace sideband snails will benefit this site (EA, pp. 36-37) by maintaining shade. Disturbance of the quarry site could result in loss of this population of Oregon shoulderband snails if a future decision is made to harvest Unit H, but because they are not old-growth obligates and have been found in numerous locations throughout the South River Resource Area, loss of this site would not be expected to contribute to a future need for listing of the species.

As described in the EA (p. 37), suitable foraging habitat for **great gray owls** is present within 200m of proposed Unit H (deferred from harvest) which could provide nesting habitat. Any decision to offer this unit is deferred until completion of surveys. If owls are detected, a 300-foot “no-harvest” buffer will be established around the meadow habitat, and a one-quarter mile protection zone around the nest tree to maintain habitat integrity.

Red-tailed hawks nesting in proposed Unit H (deferred from harvest) will not be adversely affected if a future decision is made to harvest the unit because the measures described in the EA (p. 37), would maintain the integrity of the nest grove and prevent disturbance to nesting birds and fledgling off-spring.

As described in the EA (pp. 34-35), effects to **marbled murrelets** would be associated with the removal of suitable habitat. No direct effects would be anticipated to the occupied site described in the EA (p. 15), because the occupied site is approximately 230 yards from the road system and at least three-quarters of a mile from any other units.

While the harvest would remove 128 acres of suitable habitat this represents less than five percent of suitable habitat on Federally-managed lands in the subwatershed, and is not expected to prevent persistence of murrelets in the subwatershed. The PRMP/EIS (4-52 & 53) concluded while suitable habitat and numbers of birds are not expected to increase from present low levels on private lands in the short or long term, there was a 50 to 75 percent likelihood that murrelet populations on Federal lands will remain stable and well distributed through the next 100 years. This conclusion is based on protection of occupied sites, protection of suitable habitat in Late-Successional Reserves, and future in-growth and development of additional suitable habitat.

The BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on the effects of timber harvest on marbled murrelets. The effects of the removal of suitable nesting are addressed in the August 29, 2005 *Biological Opinion for fiscal year 2003-2008 Management Activities* (1-15-05-F-0512). In the Opinion (p. 76), the Service found that “Remaining suitable habitat on the District in murrelet critical habitat/LSR, Riparian Reserves, and in stands determined to be occupied by murrelets will be sufficient to support the well-dispersed murrelet population expected in the Northwest Forest Plan . . . and District RMP.”

As addressed in the EA (pp. 39-40 & Appendix E), a meta-analysis of available demographic data for the **northern spotted owl** was conducted in 2004 by Anthony et al. combining population data from 14 study areas located throughout the range of the spotted owl. In 1999, Lint et al. found that owl populations were declining range-wide, particularly in the State of Washington. This information was synthesized with existing literature in *Scientific Evaluation of the Status of the Northern Spotted Owl* in 2004 by Courtney et al. Causes of population decline could not be identified with certainty, but researchers feel that a combination of previous habitat loss, recent loss of habitat to wildfire, predation on spotted owls, weather, prey abundance, and competition from barred owls is responsible. Researchers also noted that the importance of each of these agents likely varies by region.

Spotted owl populations in the Klamath Mountains physiographic province were shown to be stable or declining very slightly. This finding is consistent with the prediction of the Northwest Forest Plan that populations would slowly decline and eventually reach equilibrium with available habitat. Courtney et al. stated that: “the fact of such a decline is not in and of itself unexpected or reason to doubt the effectiveness of the core NWFP strategy.”

As described in the EA (p. 34), direct effects to owls would be solely associated with the removal of 150 acres of suitable habitat, consistent the assumptions of the Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS, pp. 4-54 to 4-64). The BLM consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on the effects of timber harvest on the northern spotted owl. The effects of the removal of suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat are addressed in the August 29, 2005 *Biological Opinion for fiscal year 2003-2008 Management Activities* (1-15-05-F-0512).

The Service found in the Opinion (p. 78) that conducting surveys and applying seasonal restrictions, where indicated, would minimize the possibility of directly injuring or killing individual owls. Timber harvest would, however, indirectly affect owls “. . . by removing habitat elements necessary for nesting, roosting, foraging, and dispersal.” This could result in indirect effects that include: displacement from nest areas; concentration into smaller, fragmented areas of suitable habitat that may already be occupied; increased competition for nest sites; increased risk to predation; reduced prey base; diminished reproductive success; declines in productivity and recruitment; reduction in future nesting opportunities; and reduced dispersal capabilities. Based on these factors the Service concluded that regeneration harvest was likely to adversely affect spotted owls. In the Opinion (p. 79), the Service concluded although some sites on the Roseburg District would be rendered non-viable, the effect is not expected to appreciably reduce the likelihood of spotted owl survival and recovery, noting that such declines were anticipated in the Northwest Forest Plan, and that the best available information indicates that there is no reason to believe that the conservation strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan is flawed.

As discussed in the EA (p. 34), because the location of the units is beyond the 65 yard disturbance threshold, now referred to as the “disruption” threshold by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, no disturbance to nesting owls would be anticipated. All units would be more than a quarter-mile from either known owl activity center (EA, p. 14) so no direct effects during the nesting and post-fledging periods would be anticipated from removal or modification of suitable habitat.

As a condition of consultation, a provision would be included in the timber sale contracts requiring the purchaser to notify the BLM in writing, prior to February 1st in any year in which contract operations are planned so that the BLM may conduct protocol surveys of suitable, unsurveyed habitat within a quarter-mile of each timber sale unit. If nesting owls are located, harvest operations within a quarter-mile of any nest site would be subject to seasonal restrictions from March 1 through September 30.

There are no fish species present in the project watershed currently listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (EA, p. 22-23). There is no Essential Fish Habitat in, or immediately adjacent to any timber sale units. At its closest point it is a minimum of one-half mile from the timber sale units (EA, p. 23).

No effects on fish or Essential Fish Habitat downstream of the project area are anticipated, because: Riparian Reserves established on all perennial and intermittent streams would maintain shading, prevent disturbance of stream banks and channels, protect stream pools, provide a continuous source of large wood, and filter out sediments transported overland (EA, pp. 45-48).

Road construction on ridges disconnected from the drainage network will prevent them from becoming a source of sediment or contributing to any flow enhancement. Road renovation, including installation of additional cross drains and resurfacing selected segments will effectively eliminate the potential for the roads to contribute sediment to streams (EA, pp. 50-51).

For the reasons described above, there will be no significant adverse impacts to any special status species or critical habitat (40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(9)). Any impacts will be within the range and scope of those analyzed in the Roseburg District PRMP/EIS.

Implementation of the District *Integrated Weed Management Program*, in association with project design and contract provisions will minimize risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds in association with road construction and timber harvest. Measures will be implemented to eradicate existing weed infestations. Weed establishment will be discouraged by mulching disturbed areas, seeding with native grasses, or revegetating with indigenous plants. Pressure washing or steam cleaning logging and road construction equipment prior to move-in will remove soil and other substances that could be contaminated with weed seed or other propagative materials to reduce the risk of introducing weeds from outside the project area (EA, pp. 26-27). These actions are consistent with the requirements of the Lacey Act; the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended; and Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species.

Of the ten points listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b), the following were considered and found not to apply to this action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and no precedents for future actions with significant effects.

This action conforms with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations (40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(10)). Impacts on the human environment will not exceed those anticipated in the PRMP/EIS.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider effects of this decision on National Energy Policy. Within the project area there are no known energy resources with commercial potential, and no pipelines, electrical transmission lines, energy producing or processing facilities (EA, p. 10) and there will be no known adverse effect on National Energy Policy.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that this action will not have any significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and an environmental impact statement is not required. I have further determined that the proposed action conforms to management direction from the *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

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South River Field Office

Date